

## BOOK REVIEW

CRAIG PITTMAN. 2012. **The Scent of Scandal: Greed, Betrayal, and the World's Most Beautiful Orchid.** (ISBN: 978-0-8130-3974-9, hbk.). University Press of Florida, 15 Northwest 15th St., Gainesville, Florida 32611-2079, U.S.A. (Orders: <http://www.upf.com>). \$24.95, 299 pp., b/w photos, 6" × 9".

After carefully reading this book, I turned to the back cover, and read the small heading: "TRUE CRIME/GARDENING." The first review stated: "FANTASTIC. If I did not know most of the main players I would have thought the author had a vivid and twisted imagination."—Paul Martin Brown, author of *Wild Orchids of Florida*—(and also a number of other orchid books and papers.) I was delighted. AND I had had about the same reaction as he did. I had worked with Paul when I was Sr. Technical Editor for the *Flora of North America North of Mexico* project and had edited some of his contributions to the Orchidaceae. I also edited some of his other orchid manuscripts separately. I have tremendous respect for his contributions—AND his knowledge of orchids.

Long, long ago, I had married the son of a well-known African Violet (and companion plants) family. After college and a stint in the Air Force, we moved back to Illinois and settled down in a nearby small town. We immediately got involved with the plants (Gesneriaceae and Orchidaceae, especially)—AND my mother and I were quickly introduced to the monthly African Violet Club. (My father lovingly considered us all "a bunch of delightful screwballs.")

People who REALLY love orchids, African violets, and companion plants really do tend to get very involved, and often competition can get pretty nasty. Of course, there are local shows, state shows, regional, and national shows. Ribbons are nice to earn, but tempers can really skyrocket at times. The more involved one is—and the more competition gets heated—well, it can wreak havoc, even at the local level. When you get involved enough to go to the state shows and the national shows, most people are really committed to doing their best. However, while competition for new varieties is always a big challenge, when it comes to finding beautiful and truly new species in native soils in other countries, it can become truly illegal, involved, and potentially unlawful to bring in plants collected in other countries and illegally slipped through customs.

*The Scent of Scandal* is an actual, very carefully documented account of a rare and unusually beautiful orchid that got into the country, was recognized as an extremely new and beautiful specimen, caused all kinds of interest, all kinds of trouble, was illegally named, and becomes an absolutely true, carefully documented case history. Craig Pittman has done an incredible job of researching all strands of information, documentation, actions (good or bad), timing, and ultimately providing 242 pages of page-turning fascination, 43 pages of fine print, and a bibliography, tracing the path of one extremely beautiful, very rare, illegally named orchid but still bound to the name given it according to legal practice.

This is a page turner—with real people, real emotions, good intentions, devious actions, careless decisions, and a very beautiful plant—legally or illegally "officially named." It prompts numerous concerns all the way: legalities, illegal actions, some knowingly, others perhaps not so knowingly. And every bit is carefully researched and documented by the very capable author.—Helen Jeude, Volunteer and Assistant Editor, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 1700 University Dr., Fort Worth, Texas 76107-3400, U.S.A.